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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NIAMEY 000033

DEPT FOR AF/W AND AF/RSA  
PLS PASS TO USAID FOR AFR/W  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU - J MAYBURY  
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

SIPDIS  
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SUBJECT: Niger: Former High Commissioner for Restoration of Peace  
Provides Update on the North

Ref: a) 09 Niamey 871, b) 09 Niamey 821, c) 09 Algiers 948

11. (SBU) Summary: On January 14, current National Assembly Deputy and former High Commissioner for the Restoration of Peace (HCRP) Mohamed Anacko met with DCM at the Chancery; Poloff and LES Pol Specialist also participated. The former Commissioner spoke about the successful culmination of the peace process in Niger's North, wherein all three rebel groups had reached peace agreements with the Government of Niger (GON) and disarmed. In the void left by rebels, he argued that terrorists might seek refuge in Niger's Air Mountains. DCM noted the importance of regional coordination and cooperation to counter the mobile and amorphous threat posed by terrorists. Anacko also discussed the need for international assistance for humanitarian demining to provide increased safety and the lack of a rebel reintegration plan by the Government of Niger (GON). He also opined that if no such plan is developed, peace in the North would be short-lived. End summary.

Peace has Returned to the North

12. (SBU) Anacko called on DCM at the Chancery on January 14 in a meeting that included PolOff and Pol Specialist; he stated that the last insurgent group to lay down their weapons, the Front of Forces for Rectification (FFR) was disarmed in late December in Arlit, a town located in the North. Anacko stated that the GON had made considerable progress and that tourists are returning to the region, being able to travel to and within the urban parts of Agadez without problems. He stated his belief that Nigeriens are no longer fearful of the rebel groups; they recognize that their members have indeed laid down their arms and do not wish to resort to violence. Anacko said, however, that tourists are still worried about stability in the area, and are weary to travel to the region. Bandits continue to engage in illicit activities in the North; however, he added, this cycle of banditry is normal given the long period of violence that occurred in the region. (Note: Anacko's description of circumstances in the North and the status of rebel peace talks and disarmament as of the fall of 2009 are discussed in refs A and b). End note.)

Demining Experts Needed to Clear Vast Areas

13. (SBU) Anacko stated that throughout the vast lands in the north, rebels had left mines that still needed to be located and destroyed. He mentioned that rebels were able to indicate the general perimeter of areas where mines were placed, but could not give exact locations. Anacko mentioned that the GON had received assurances from the European Union and other development partners of receiving technical expertise to help demine these vast areas.

## Government Needs to Develop Action Plan

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¶4. (SBU) Anacko stated that the GON needs to make a better effort to plan for the reintegration of former rebel members into society. He stated that rebels needed a way to support their families. When pressed for more specifics, he said that the Government should create training schools to teach former rebels technical skills. These skills could then be used to gain employment at one of the multinational enterprises operating in the North.

## Terrorist Elements in the North

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¶5. (SBU) Anacko stated that although there was a formal disarmament agreement between President Tandja and rebels, that there are still areas for concern. When pressed for details, Anacko mentioned that there will be a void left by the peace process. He said that traffickers and even Al-Qaida may be tempted to occupy bases and hideouts that were used previously by rebels in the North. He mentioned that this was a vulnerability for the GON, which might be hard-pressed to counter. He said that the GON did not have the means to deal effectively with terrorist organizations and that the GON would welcome international support; he further underscored the need for better regional cooperation. He went on to say terrorists may seek to hide in the Air Mountains as alternative to taking refuge in Mali.

## GON Urged to Engage in Tamanrasset, Regional Approach

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¶6. (SBU) DCM urged Anacko to support the participation of the GON in the Algerian-backed regional approach to countering terrorism (ref C), and to support the deferred heads of state meeting on the same

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topic in Bamako. Regional coordination and cooperation were essential, he noted, to deal with this mobile and amorphous threat.

## Comment

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¶7. (SBU) Anacko noted the gap between the "political tensions" between the United States and Niger and the "economic and security realities." He hinted that President Tandja would be "sensitive" to advice and/or funding from the USG in any areas. Given that traffickers and even Al-Qaida might be tempted to recruit former rebels, development of technical schools that would train former rebels in vocational skills would be beneficial for both the GON and the USG. End comment.

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